Minions of the Moon

BY MADISON CAWEIN

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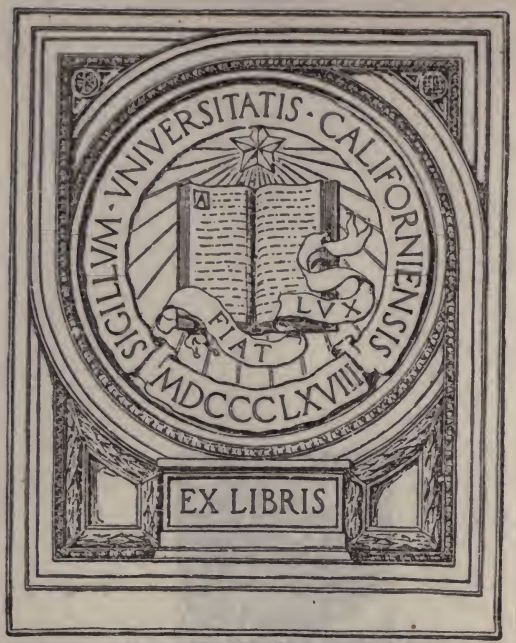
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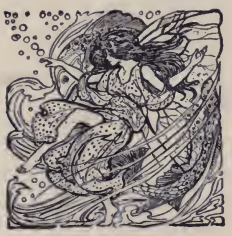

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MINIONS OF THE MOON

Minions of the Moon

A Little Book of Song and Story

By

MADISON CAWEIN

Author of "The Republic," etc.

Illustrated

STEWART & KIDD COMPANY

PUBLISHERS - - - CINCINNATI

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UNIV. OF
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TO

ALL CHILDREN, BIG AND LITTLE,

WHO HAVE EVER BELIEVED, OR STILL BELIEVE IN,
FAERIES, I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK,
THAT ATTEMPTS TO SET FORTH
IN WORDS ALL THAT SUCH
A BELIEF MAY MEAN
TO THE SOUL
OF MAN.

273121

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PROLOGUE

WHAT loveliness the years contrive
To rob us of! what exquisite
Beliefs, in which thought chanced to hit
On truths that with the world survive!
Dream-truths, that still attend their flocks
On the high hills of heart and mind,
Peopling the streams, the woods and rocks
With Beauty running like the wind.

They are not dead; but year by year
Still hold us through the inner eye
Of thought, and so can never die
As long as there's one heart to hear
Nature addressing words of love,—
(As once she spoke to Rome and Greece,)—
Unto the soul, whose faith shall prove
The dream will last though all else cease.

MINIONS OF THE MOON

WOOD DREAMS

ABOUT the time when bluebells swing
Their elfin belfries for the bee
And in the fragrant House of Spring
Wild Music moves; and Fantasy
Sits weaving webs of witchery:
And Beauty's self in silence leans
Above the brook and through her hair
Beholds her face reflected there,
And wonders what the vision means—
About the time when bluebells swing,

I found a path of glooms and gleams,
A way that Childhood oft has gone,
That leads into the Wood of Dreams,
Where, as of old, dwell Fay and Faun,
And Faërie dances until dawn;
And Elfland calls from her blue cave,
Or, starbright, on her snow-white steed,
Rides blowing on a silver reed
That Magic follows like a slave—
I found a path of glooms and gleams.

And in that Wood I came again
On old enchantments.—There, behold,
I saw them pass, a kingly train,
Fable and Legend, wise and old,
In garb of glimmering green and gold:

While far away forgotten bells
And horns of Faërie made faint sound;
And all the anxious heaven around
And earth grew gossamered with spells,
And whirled with ouphen feet again.

And, lo, I saw the ancient Hall
Of Story rise, where Dreams conspire
With Words and Music to enthrall
The Yearning of the soul's desire,
Holding it fast with charméd fire:
Where Glamour bows in servitude;
And, Lord of Ecstasy and Awe,
Song, with his henchmen, Lore and Law,
Sits 'mid the mighty Brotherhood
Of Beauty in that twilight Hall.

Then far away the forest rang
With something more than bugle calls:
A voice, a summons wild that sang,
As if Adventure in his halls
Awoke; or Daring on the walls
Shouted to Youth to take his stand
Before the wizard-guarded tower
Where Love, within her secret bower,
Beckons him on with moon-white hand—
Why was it that the forest rang?

And then I knew: It was my Sprite,—
My Witch, whose spells had led me far:
Who held me with the old delight,
And drew my soul beyond the bar
Of all the real, like a star.

How long ago, how far that day,
Since first I met her in the wild!
And on my face her white face smiled,
And my child fears she soothed away!
Ay! ay! 'twas she—my airy Sprite!

And on my heart again the hour
Flashed as when first she gazed at me;
Her loveliness clothed on with power
And joy and godlike mystery,
A portion of Earth's ecstasy:
Again I felt, in ways unknown,
Down in my soul a memory waken
Of some far kiss once given and taken,
That made me hers, her very own,
Once every year for one brief hour. . . .

A Dryad laughed among the trees;
A Naiad flashed with limbs a-spark;
A Satyr reached rough arms to seize;
A Faun foot danced adown the dark
To music of rude pipes of bark:
Earth crowded all its shapes around,
Myths, bare and beautiful of breast,
'Mid whom pursuing passion pressed,
Wild, Pan-like, leaping from the ground.—
A Dryad laughed among the trees.

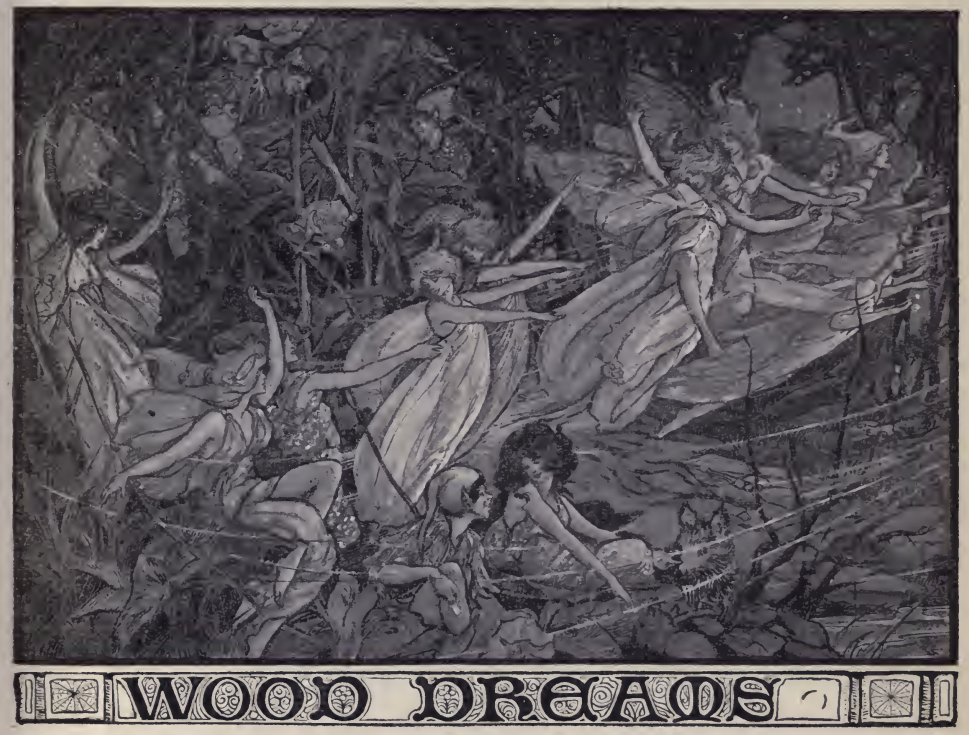
Then Elfdom, in a starlike rain,
To right and left rose blossom-slim;
And urged its Joy in twinkling train
Down many a flower and rainbow rim
Of moonbeam.—Fancy sat with Whim:

And from the ferns gleamed glowworm eyes,
Where Faërie held its Court; and, green,
An impish spirit ran between,
With Puck-like laughter of surprise,
And firefly flickerings, wild as rain.

Then suddenly a light that grew,
And in the light—my Witch! who stood,
As crystal-evident as dew,
Weaving a spell that made the wood
Take on a dream's similitude:—
And, lo, through radiance and perfume
I saw Romance, crowned with a crown,
And Chivalry come riding down,
On two great steeds, all gold and gloom,
Round whom the splendor grew and grew. . . .

And of the Dream the forest dreams
Again my soul becomes a part:
Again my magic armor gleams;
Again beneath its steel my heart
Throbs all impatient for the start.
Again the towers of Time and Chance
Loom grimly, where, forever fair,
Wrapped in the glory of her hair,
Beauty lies bound by Necromance,
The Beauty that we know in dreams.

And, as before, again I smile,
Delaying still to break the spell,
Facing the gateway of old Guile,
Where hangs the slug-horn that shall knell
Defiance to the Courts of Hell.—



WOOD DREAMS

" Then Elfdom, in a starlike rain,
To right and left rose blossom-slim."

What though around me, torch on torch,
The eyes of Danger, glowering, wait!
What though Death heaves a sword of hate
Beneath the gate's enchanted arch!—
I raise the horn again and smile.

What now, O Night, shall make me pause?—
I face the darkness of the tomb,
That stirs with clank of iron claws,
And threatenings of gigantic doom,—
The monster in the granite gloom.
And then full in the face of Night
I hurl my challenge, blast on blast—
The drawbridge thunders; and the vast
Echoes with batlike wings in flight.—
There is no thing to give me pause.

My heart sings, bounding to its quest.
I mount the stairs to where she sleeps,
A rose upon her brow and breast,
And in her long hair's golden deeps
The glory of the youth she keeps.—
I kneel again; I clasp her there;
I kiss her mouth; but, lo, behold!
Her beauty crumbles into mold,
And all the castle goes in air,
And with it all my heart's high quest. . . .

And in the wood I wake again.
The Dream is gone as is the child,
Who followed far in rapture's train,
And by a vision was beguiled,—
The Witch, the Presence undefiled,

Whose call still sounds o'er holt and hollow,
An elfin bugle, in the morn;
And in the eve a faery horn,
Bidding the dreaming heart to follow,—
The child in man that hears again. . . .

For what we dream is never lost.—
Dreams mold the soul within the clay.
The rapture and the pentecost
Of beauty shape our lives some way:
They are the beam, the guiding ray,
That Nature dowers us with at birth,—
And, like the light upon the crown
Of some dark hill, that towers down,
Point us to Heaven, not to Earth,
Above the world where dreams are lost.

MINIONS OF THE MOON

I

THROUGH leafy windows of the trees
The full moon shows a wrinkled face,
And, trailing dim her draperies
Of mist from place to place,
The Twilight leads the breeze.

And now, far-off, beside a pool,
Dusk blows a reed, a guttural note;
Then sows the air around her full
Of twinkling disc and mote,
And moth-shapes soft as wool.

And from a glen, where lights glow by,
Through hollowed hands she sends a call,
And Solitude, with owlet cry,
Answers: and Evenfall
Steps swiftly from the sky.

And Mystery, in hodden gray,
Steals forth to meet her: and the Dark
Before him slowly makes to sway
A jack-o'-lantern spark
To light him on his way.

The grasshopper its violin
Tunes up, the katydid its fife;

The beetle drums; the grig makes din,
Informing Elfin life
Night's revels now begin.

And from each side along the way
Old Witchcraft waves a batlike hand,
And summons forth the toadstool gray
To point the path to Faeryland,
Where all man's longings stray.

II

The snail puts forth two staring horns
And down the toadstool slides;
The wind sits whispering in the thorns
Of one unseen who hides:
Of him, the Sprite,
With glowworm light,
Who watchmans secrets of the Night.

The bee sleeps in the berry-bloom;
The bird dreams on its nest;
The moon-moth swoons through drowsed perfume
Upon a fragrant quest:
It seeks for him,
The Pixy slim,
Who tags with wet each wildflower's rim.

The milkwort leans an ear of pink
And listens for the dew;
The fireflies in the wildrose wink
That seems to listen too:

For her, the Fay,
With sword-like ray,
Who opens buds at close of day.

The moon, that dares not come too near,
Keeps to the highest hill;
The little brook it seems, for fear
Of something strange, is still:
The Mystery,
It well may be,
That talks to it of Faërie.

THE MOON IN THE WOOD

I

FROM hill and hollow, side by side,
The shadows came, like dreams, to sit
And watch, mysterious, sunset-eyed,
The wool-winged moths and bats aflit,
And the lone owl that cried and cried.

And then the forest rang a gong,
Hoarse, toadlike; and from out the gate
Of darkness came a sound of song,
As of a gnome that called his mate,
Who answered in his own strange tongue.

And all the forest leaned to hear,
And saw, from forth the entangling trees,
A naked spirit drawing near,
A glimmering presence, whom the breeze
Kept whispering,—"Forward! Have no fear."

II

The woodland, seeming at a loss,
Afraid to breathe, or make a sound,
Poured, where her silvery feet should cross,
A dripping pathway on the ground,
And hedged it in with ferns and moss.

And then the silence sharply shook
A cricket tambourine; and Night
From out her musky bosom took
A whippoorwill flute, and, lost to sight
Sat piping to a wildwood brook.

Until from out the shadows came
A furtive foot, a gleam, a glow;
And with a lamp of crystal flame
The spirit stole, as white as snow,
And put the firmament to shame.

III

Then up and down vague movements went,
As if the faeries sought an herb;
And here and there a bush was bent,
A wildflower raised: the wood-pool's curb
Was circled with a scarf of scent.

And deep within her house of weeds
Old Mystery hung a glowworm lamp,
And decked her hair with firefly beads,
And sate herself 'mid dew and damp,
And crooned a love-song to the reeds.

Then through the gates of solitude,
Where Witchery her shuttle plied,
The Spirit entered, white and nude—
And where she went, on every side,
Dreams followed through the solitude.

THE MOON SPIRIT

ONE night I lingered in the wood
And saw a spirit-form that stood
Among the wildflowers. Like the dew
It twinkled; partly wind and scent;
Then down a moonbeam there it blew,
And like a gleam of water went.
Or was it but a dream that grew
Out of the wind and dew and scent.

Could I have seized it, made it mine,
As poets have the thought divine
Of Nature, then I too might know,—
(Like them who once wild magic bound
Into their rhymes of long-ago),—
Such ecstasy of earth around
As never yet held heart before
Or language for its beauty found.

LOVELINESS

HOW good it is, when overwrought,
To seek the woods and find a thought,
That to the soul's attentive sense
Delivers much in evidence
Of truths for which man long has sought—
Truths, which no vulture years contrive
To rob the heart of, holding it
To all the glory infinite
Of beauty that shall aye survive.

Still shall it lure us. Year by year
Addressing now the spirit ear
With thoughts, and now the spirit eye
With visions that like gods go by,
Filling the mind with bliss and fear—
In spite of modern man who mocks
The Loveliness of old, nor minds
The ancient myths, gone with the winds,
And dreams that people woods and rocks.

THE NIGHT-RAIN

TATTERED, in ragged raiment of the rain,
The Night arrives.—Outside the window there
He stands and, streaming, taps upon the pane;
Or, crouching down beside the cellar-stair,
Letting his hat-brim drain,
Mutters, black-gazing through his trickling hair.

Then on the roof with cautious feet he treads,
Whispering a word into the windy flues;
And all the house, huddling its flowerbeds,
Looks, dark of face, as if it heard strange news,
Hugging the musky heads
Of all its roses to its sides of ooze.

Now in the garden, with a glowworm lamp,
Night searches, letting his black mantle pour;
Treading the poppies down with heavy tramp,
Thudding the apple, sodden to its core,
Into the dripping damp,
From boughs the wet loads, dragging more and more.

Then at the barn he fumbles, gropes his way,
Through splashing pools; and, seeping, enters in
The stalls and creeps among the bedding hay,
Burying him moistly to his clammy chin,
While near him, brown and gray,
The dozing cattle make a drowsy din.

The martin-box, poled high above the gate,
He pushes till the fluttering fledglings wake,
Wondering what bird it is that comes so late:
Then to the henhouse door he gives a shake;
Or, like a thief await,
Leans listening softly with black heart aquake.

Then with his ragged cloak flung back he goes,
With flickering lantern, where the stream o'erflowed,
Breathing wet scents of wayside weed and rose,
And guttural music of the frog and toad;
A firefly-light, that glows,
Green in his hand to guide him on his road.

And doffing then, upon the wooded hill,
His hat of cloud, a little while he stands,
Hearkening in silence to the leaping rill;
Then, stooping low, he lifts in azure hands
A great gold daffodil—
The moon—and pins it in his cloak's blown bands.

THE DREAM CHILD

THERE is a place (I know it well)
Where beech trees crowd into a gloom,
And where a twinkling woodland well
Flings from a rock a rippling plume,
And, like a Faun beneath a spell,
The silence breathes of beam and bloom.

And here it was I met with her,
The child I never hoped to see,
Who long had been heart's-comforter,
And soul's-companion unto me,
Telling me oft of myths that were,
And of far faerylands to-be.

She stood there smiling by the pool,
The cascade made below the rocks;
Innocent, naked, beautiful,
The frail gerardia in her locks,
A flower, elfin-sweet and cool,
Freckled as faery four-o'-clocks.

Her eyes were rain-bright; and her hair
An amber gleam like that which tips
The golden leaves when Fall comes fair;
And twin red berries were her lips;
Her beauty, pure and young and bare,
Shone like a star from breasts to hips.

Oft had I seen her thus, of old,
In dreams, where she played many parts:
A form, possessing in its mold
The high perfection of all Arts,
With all the hopes to which men hold,
And loves for which they break their hearts.

And she was mine. Within her face
I read her soul. . . . Then, while she smiled,
A sudden wind swept through the place
And—she was gone. My heart beat wild;
The leaves shook and, behold, no trace
Was there of her, the faery child.

Only a ray of gold that hung
Above the water; and a bough,
Rain-bright and berried, low that swung:
Yet, in my heart of hearts, somehow,
I felt (I need not search among
The trees) that she was hiding now.

ROMANCE

OH, go not to the lonely hill,
That from its heart pours one clear well!
There is a witch who haunts it still,
Who would undo you with her spell.—
Oh, go not to the lonely hill.

There was a youth who, with his book,
Would dream for hours and hours alone
Beneath the boughs, beside the brook,
Seated upon a mossy stone,
His gaze upon his wonder-book.

The scent of lilies there is cool,
Hanging in many a wild raceme
Around a glimmering woodland pool,
From whence flows down a shadowy stream.—
The scent of lilies there is cool. . . .

Between his eyes and unturned page
He saw her bright face, smiling, nod:
And knew her of another Age,
A pagan Age that mocked at God.—
She seemed to rise from out the page,

Clothed on with dreams and forest scent,
And light and wind, that breathed and blew;
A water-gleam, that came and went,
She seemed, who round her presence drew
A portion of the light and scent.

With eyes of crystal gray she smiled
  Into his eyes and murmured words
Of love that made his pulse beat wild,—
  His heart to flutter like a bird's
The fowler snares—while slow she smiled.

And then she kissed him; smoothed his hair;
  And bade him come. And he was fain
To follow her, yea, anywhere,
  And as her slave for aye remain,—
When she had kissed his mouth and hair.

And he arose and took her hand,
  And followed as one does in dreams:
And, lo, they came to Faeryland,
  And danced an hour by its streams,
And sat an hour, hand in hand.

When he returned to Earth, no place
  Remembered him that once had known:
Save for the memory of her face
  Here in the world he walked alone,
His mortal heart held by that place.

And so he sits where all may see,
  And tells his tale, that none believes,
Like you, who now depart from me,
  Who leave me with a soul that grieves
For her my eyes no more shall see.

Nay; go not to that hill, lest you
  Should fall beneath that Faery's spell,
Like me, and evermore pursue
  A dream of beauty, loved too well,
That holds you and escapes from you.

THE WOOD GOD

I HEARD his step upon the moss;
I glimpsed his shadow in the stream;
And thrice I saw the brambles toss
Wherein he vanished like a dream.

A great beech aimed a giant stroke
At my bent head, in mad alarm;
And then a chestnut and an oak
Struck at me with a knotted arm.

The brambles clutched at me; and fear
For one swift instant held me fast—
Just long enough to let me hear
His windlike footsteps vanish past.

The brushwood made itself more dense,
And looped my feet with green delay;
And, threatening every violence,
The rocks and thorns opposed my way.

But still I followed; strove and strained
In spite of all the wood devised
To hold me back, and on him gained—
The deity I had surprised.

The genius of the wood, whose flute
Had led me far; at first, to see
The imprint of his form and foot
Upon the moss beneath the tree.

A bird piped warning and he fled:
I saw a gleam of gold and green:
The woodland held its breath for dread
That its great godhead would be seen.

Could I but speak him face to face,
And for a while his joy behold,
What visions there might then take place,
What myst'ries of the woods be told!—

And well I knew that he was near
By that soft sound the water made
Upon its rock; and by the fear
The wind unto the leaves betrayed.

And by the sign bough made to bough,
The secret signal, brusque and brief,
That said, "On guard! He's looking now!"
And pointed at me every leaf.

Then suddenly the way lay wide;
The brambles ceased to clutch and tear;
And even the grim trees shrunk aside,
And motioned me,—"He's there! he's there!"

A ruse!—I knew it for a ruse,
To thwart my search at last.—But I
Had been a fool to follow clues,
And let the god himself pass by.

And then the wood in mighty mirth
  Laughed at me, all its bulk a-swing;
It roared and bent its giant girth
  As if it'd done a clever thing.

But I,—on whom its scorn was spent,—
  Said not a word, but turned away:
To me this truth was evident—
  No man may see the gods to-day.

THE WOODLAND WATERFALL

ROCK and root and fern and flower—
They had led him for an hour
To the inmost forest, where,
In a hollow, green with moss,
That the deep ferns trailed across,
Fell a fall, a presence fair,
Syllabling to the air,
Charming with cool sounds the bower.

It was she he used to know
In some land of Long Ago,
Some far land of Yesterday,
Where he listened to her words,
And she lured him, like the birds,
To her lips; and in his way
Danced a bubble or rainbow-ray,
Or a minnow's silvery bow.

Round him now her arms she flung,
And, as dripping there she clung,
In her gaze of green and gold
He beheld a beauty gleam,
And the shadow of a dream,—
That to no man hath been told,—
Like a Faery tale of old,
Rise up glimmering, ever young.

As his form to hers she drew
In his soul, it seemed, he knew
She was daughter of a king,
Hate-transformed into a fall
By a witch; long-held in thrall,
And condemned to sigh and sing
Till some mortal find the ring,
Charm, that would the spell undo.

In a pool of spray and foam,
With a crystal-bubble dome,
Suddenly he saw the charm:
Newt-like, coiling, there it lay—
Could he seize it he would stay,
Master all! and, white and warm,
Clasp the princess in his arm,
Lead her to her palace home!

He would free her; share her crown.—
So he thought; and, bare and brown,
Clove the water at a blow.—
But, behold, a mottled form,
Like a newt's, stretched out an arm,
Crimson-freckled, from below;
And before his heart could know,
With wild laughter drew him down.

THE DEAD DREAM

BETWEEN the darkness and the day
As, lost in doubt, I went my way,
I met a shape, as faint as fair,
With star-like blossoms in its hair:
Its body, which the moon shone through,
Was partly cloud and partly dew:
Its eyes were bright as if with tears,
And held the look of long-gone years;
Its mouth was piteous, sweet yet dread,
As if with kisses of the dead:
And in its hand it bore a flower,
In memory of some haunted hour.

I knew it for the Dream I'd had
In days when life was young and glad.
Why had it come with love and woe
Out of the happy Long-Ago?—
Upon my brow I felt its breath,
Heard ancient words of faith and death,
Sweet with the immortality
Of many a fragrant memory:
And to my heart again I took
Its joy and sorrow in a look,
And kissed its eyes and held it fast,
And bore it home from out the past—
My Dream of Beauty and of Truth,
I dreamed had perished with my Youth.

THE SEA FAERY

SHE was strange as the orchids that blossom
And glimmer and shower their balm
And bloom on the tropical ocean,
That crystals round islands of palm:
And she sang to and beckoned and bound me
With beauty immortal and calm.

She was wild as the spirits that banner,
Auroral, the ends of the Earth,
With polar processions, that battle
With Darkness; or, breathing, give birth
To Silence; and herd from the mountains
The icebergs, gigantic of girth.

She was silver as sylphids who blend with
The morning the pearl of their cheeks:
And rosy as spirits whose tresses
Trail golden the sunset with streaks:
An opaline presence that beckoned
And spake as the sea-rapture speaks:—

"Come with me! come down in the ocean!—
Yea, leave this dark region with me!—
Come! leave it! forget it in thunder
And roll of the infinite sea!
Come with me!—No mortal bliss equals
The bliss I shall give unto thee." . . .

And so it was then that she bound me
With witchcraft no mortal divines,
While softly with kisses she drew me,
As the moon draws a dream from the pines,
Down, down to her cavern of coral,
Where ever the sea-serpent twines.

And ever the creatures, whose shadows
Bulk huge as an isle on the sight,
Swim cloud-like and vast, without number,
Around her who leans, like a light,
And smiles at me sleeping, pale-sleeping,
Wrapped deep in her mermaiden might.

MY LADY OF THE BEECHES

HERE among the beeches
Winds and wild perfume,
That the twilight pleaches
Into gleam and gloom,
Build for her a room.

Her whose Beauty cometh,
Misty as the morn,
When the wild-bee hummeth,
At its honey-horn,
In the wayside thorn.

As the wood grows dimmer,
With the drowsy night,
Like a moonbeam glimmer
Here she walks in white,
With a firefly light.

Moths around her flitting,
Like a moth she goes,
Here a moment sitting
By this wilding rose,
With my heart's repose.

Every bud and flower
From her look has caught
Something of that hour
While she stood in thought
Gazing into naught.

Every bough that dances
  Has assumed the grace
Of her form; and fancies,
  Flashed from eye and face,
  Brood about the place.

Every wind that flutters,
  Says what is expressed
Of her heart and utters
  Sounds of peace and rest
  Pulsing in her breast.

And the water, shaken
  In its plunge and poise,
To itself has taken
  Quiet of her voice,
  And restrains its joys.

Would that these could tell me
  What and whence she is,—
She, who doth enspell me,
  Fill my soul with bliss
  Of her spirit-kiss.

Though the heart beseech her,
  And the soul implore,
Who is it may reach her,
  Safe behind the door
  Of all woodland lore?

THE WOOD ANEMONE

THE thorn-tree waved a bough of May
And all its branches bent
To indicate the wildwood way
The Wind and Sunbeam went.

A wildrose here, a wildrose there
Lifted appealing eyes,
And looked the path they did not dare
Reveal in other wise.

Wild parsley tossed a plume of gold
And breathed so sweet a sigh,
I guessed the way, it never told,
Which they had hastened by.

I traced the Beam, so swift and white,
In many a woodland place
By wildflower footprints of its flight
And gleamings of its grace.

I knew its joy had filled with song
The high heart of the bird,
That rippled, rippled all day long
In dells that hushed and heard.

I knew the Wind with flashing feet
Had charmed the brook withal,
Who in its cascades did repeat
The music of that call.

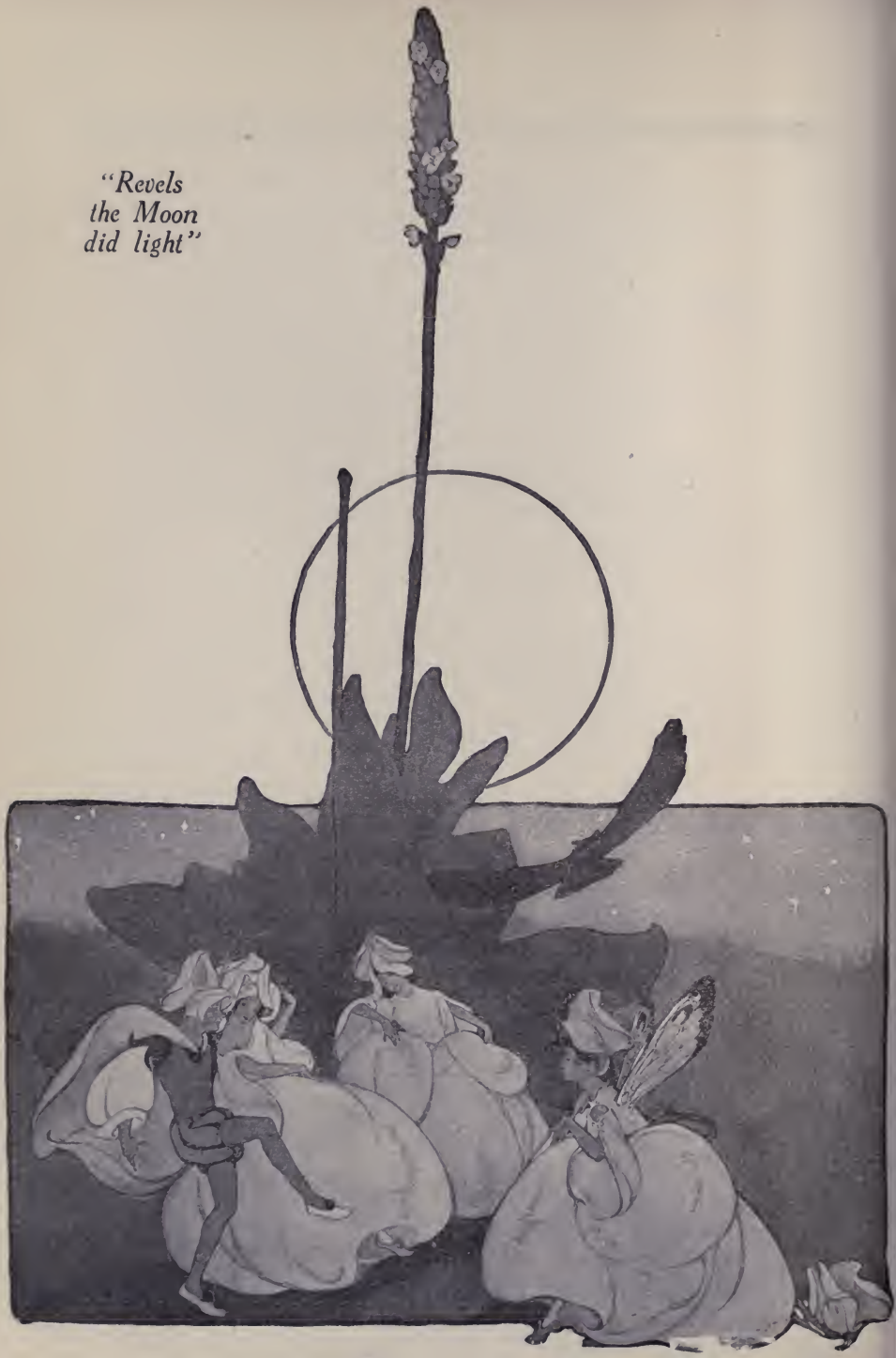
All were in league to help me find,
Or tell to me the way,
Which now before me, now behind,
These two had gone in play.

I could not understand how these
Could hide so near to me,
When by the whispering of the trees
I knew the wood could see.

Until, all breathless with its joy,
The Wind, that could not rest,
Ran past me, like a romping boy,
And bade me look my best.

And there I saw them clasped in bliss
Beneath an old beech tree:
And here's the flower born of their kiss—
This wild anemone.

"Revels the Moon did light"



PIXY WOOD

THE vat-like cups of the fungus, filled
With the rain that fell last night,
Are casks of wine that the elves distilled
For revels the moon did light.
The owlet there with her "Who-oh-who,"
And the frog with his "All is right,"
Could tell a tale if they wanted to
Of what took place last night.

In that hollow beech, where the wood decays,
Their toadstool houses stand;
A little village of drabs and grays,
Cone-roofed, of Faeryland.
That moth, which gleams like a lichen there,
Is one of an elfin band,
That whisks away if you merely dare
To try to understand.

The snail, that slides on that mushroom's top,
And the slug on its sleepy trail,
Wax fat on the things the elves let drop
At feast in the moonlight pale.
The whippoorwill, that grieves and grieves,
If it would, could tell a tale
Of what took place here under the leaves
Last night on the Dreamland Trail.

The trillium there and the Mayapple,
With their white eyes opened wide,
Of many a secret sight could tell
If speech were not denied:
Of many a pixy revelry
And rout on which they've spied,
With the hollow tree, which there you see
Opens its eye-knots wide.

THE GRAY SISTERS

WHAT is that which walks by night
In flying tatters of leaves and weeds,
When the clouds rush by like dæmon steeds,
And the moon is a jack-o'-lantern light
Low in the pool's dark reeds?—
What is that, like a soul who sinned?—
Is it a witch? or the Autumn wind?

What is that which sits and glowers
Under the trees by the forest pool?
With a cloak of moss whence the raindrops drule,
Chilling the air with a sense of showers
And touch of the cold toadstool:
What is that, with its breath of gloom?—
Is it a witch? or the Fall perfume?

What is that in a mantle of gray,
With rags, like water, that wreathe and wind?
That gropes the forest, as if to find
A path, long-lost, on its midnight way,
Shadowy, old and blind:
What is that, so white and whist?—
Is it a witch? or the Autumn mist?

You *may* have met them; you *may* have heard;
As I have heard them; as I have met:

The three gray sisters of wind and wet
Each with a spell or a cryptic word
Working her magic yet:
The three gray sisters, the witches old,
Daughters of Autumn, who haunt the wold.

THE FAERY PIPE

WOODS of wonder, wonder ways,
Where the Faery Piper plays,
Bidding all to up and follow
Over haunted hill and hollow,
And behold again the Fays
Whirling in a moonlit maze.

He whom once our Childhood knew,
Piper of the Dream-come-true;
Who with music reared us towers
Of Adventure, where the Hours
Wove enchantments; peopled too
With the deeds of Daring-do.

Oh, to hear the pipe he blows
Saying all of Let's-Suppose!
Who once bade us brave the danger
Of the Dragon, for the stranger,—
Princess,—who, to tell her woes,
Dropped from her high Tower a rose.

She, for whom we would have died,
To whose Tower the pipe was guide,
And from Witchcraft's power delivered.—
How the dungeon-tower shivered
When our trumpet blast defied,
Challenging its giant pride!—

Oh, again to stand and see
Vision grow reality!
Hear the Elfland bugles blowing,
And, beyond all seeing, knowing,
Gallop to our empery
There again in Faërie!

Oh, again to leave regret,
Fever of the world and fret!
Tears and loss and work and worry!
For the Land of Song and Story,
For that Land none can forget,
Of which Thought is minion yet. . . .

Woods of wonder, wonder ways,
Where the Faery Piper plays,
Saying, "Quit your melancholy!
Leave the world of work and folly!
Follow me to where the Fays
Trip it as in Childhood's days."

THE FOREST OF OLD ENCHANTMENT

SQUAW-BERRY, bramble, Solomon's-seal,
And rattlesnake-weed make wild the place:
You seem to feel that a Faun will steal
Or leap before your face. . . .
Is *that* the reel of a Satyr's heel,
Or the brook in its headlong race?

Yellow puccoon and the blue-eyed grass,
And briars a riot of bloom:
And now from the mass of that sassafras
What is it shakes perfume?—
A Nymph, who has for her looking-glass
That pool in the mossy gloom?

Mile on mile of the trees and vines,
And rock and fern and root:
What is it pines where the wild-grape twines?
A dove? or Pan's own flute?—
And there!—what shines into rosy lines?
A flower? or Dryad's foot?

White-plantain, bluet, and, golden-clear,
The crowfoot's earth-bound star:
Now what draws near to the spirit ear?—
A god? or a sunbeam-bar?—
And what do we hear with a sense of fear?—
Diana? or winds afar?

If we but thought as the old Greeks thought,
And knew what the ancients knew,
Then Beauty sought of the soul were caught
And breathed into being too;
And out of naught were the real wrought,
And the dream of the world made true.

THE HOUSE OF MOSS

(Built by a Child in a deep Forest.)

HOW fancy romped and played here,
Building this house of moss!
A faery house, the shade here
And sunlight gleam across;
And how it danced and swayed here,
A child with locks atoss!

I pause to gaze and ponder;
And, whisk! I seem to know
How, in that house and under,
The starry elf-lamps glow,
And pixy dances sunder
The hush when night falls slow.

Oh, that a witch had willed it
That those child-dreams come true!
With which the child-heart filled it
While 'neath glad hands it grew,
And, dim, amort, it builded
Far better than it knew.

For Middleage,—that wandered
And found it hidden here,
And, pausing, gazed and pondered
Knowing a mystery near—
A dream, its childhood squandered,
Or lost, gone many a year.

Had not Time so distorted
My vision, haply I
Had also viewed, wild-hearted,
Dreams which that child drew nigh,
And to the world imparted
Strange news none dare deny.

ROSE AND REDBIRD

A Faerytale.

I HAD the strangest dream last night:—
I dreamed the poppies, red and white,
That over-run the flower-bed,
Changed to wee women, white and red,
Who, jeweled with the twinkling wet,
Joined hands and danced a minuet.

And there, beside the garden walk,
I thought a red-rose stood at talk
With a black cricket; and I heard
The cricket say, "You are the bird,
Red-crested, who comes every day
To sing his lyric roundelay."

The rose replied,—"Nay! you must know
That bird and I loved long-ago:
I am a princess, *he* a prince:
And we were parted ever since
The world of science made us don
The new disguises we have on."

And then the rose put off disguise
And stood revealed before my eyes,
A faery princess; and, in black,
His tiny fiddle on his back,
An elfin fiddler, long of nose,
The cricket bowed before the rose.

A house of moss and firefly-light
Now seemed to rise within the night
Beside the tree where, bending low,
The flowers stood, a silken row,
Around the rose,—a faery band
Before the Queen of Faeryland.

And suddenly I saw the side
Of a great beech-tree open wide,

And there, behold! were wondrous things,—
Slim flower-like people bright with wings,
Who bowed before a throne of state,
Whereon the rose and redbird sate.

And then I woke; and there, behold,
Was naught except the moonlight's gold
On tree and garden; and the flowers
Safe snuggled in their beds and bowers:
The rose was gone, but where she'd stood
Lay scattered crimson of her hood.

The cricket still was at his tune
Somewhere between the dawn and moon:
And I'd have sworn it was a dream
Had I not glimpsed a glowworm gleam
And heard a chuckling in the tree,
And seen the dewdrop wink at me.

THE DANCE OF SUMMER

SUMMER, gowned in catnip-gray,
Goes her weedy wildwood way,
Where with rosehip-buttoned coat,
Cardinal flower-plume afloat,
With the squirrel-folk at play,

Brown September, smiling, stands,
Chieftain of the Romany bands
Of the Fall—a gypsy crew,
Glimmering in lobelia-blue,
Gold and scarlet down the lands.

Summer, with a redbird trill,
Dares him follow at her will,
There to romp in tree and vine,
Drink the sunset's crimson wine,
And on beauty feast his fill.

He his Autumn whistle takes,
And his dark hair backward shakes;
Pipes a note, and bids her on,—
Dancing like a woodland faun,—
And she follows through the brakes.

She must follow: she is bound
By the wildness of the sound.—
Is it love or necromance?—
Down the world he leads the dance,
And the woods go whirling round.

Wildly briars clutch and hold;
Branches reach out arms of gold;
Naught can stay them. Pipe, and follow
Over hill and over hollow
Till the night fall dark and cold.

Now her gown is torn in shreds,
And her gossamer veil is threads
Streaming round her nakedness;
And the flowers, at her distress,
Weep and hide their drooping heads.

Round her whirl the frightened leaves,
And the stammering water grieves;
Nut and haw the forest throws
At her as she dancing goes
To the pipe that magic weaves.

Death will have her. She must spin
Till, a skeleton, she win
To the land where Winter dwells,
Where shall end Fall's gipsy spells,
And her long white sleep begin.

A FOREST FLUTE

I HEARD a reed among the hills,
A woodland reed of music where,
Like madcap children, ran the rills,
Boisterous, with wildly flowing hair.

I knew it for a pipe the Spring
Tuned to the rapture in her heart,
That in the egg should shape the wing,
And in the seed the wildflower start.

And I—I followed where it blew,
And found a valley, dim and green,
A wild spot, like a drop of dew,
Hung glimmeringly two hills between.

I heard the flute, a bird-like note,
That made the place a magic well,
On which enchantment seemed to float,
A spirit in a rainbow shell.

I knew what danced there with its flute,
Unseen, a part of soul and mind:
I saw the imprint of its foot,
In many a flower of orchis-kind.

I knew it of an ancient race,
Some myth the Greeks had known of old.
Could I have spoken it face to face
Of what lost dreams I might have told!

BUBBLES

AS I went through the wood, the wood,
Through fern and pimpernel,
A water fell, a water stood,
Twinkling within a dell,
And Naiad fancies, gleaming, hung
Like bubbles there the moss among.

And as I sat beside the fall
And watched a rainbow beam,
There rose a dream, a spirit tall,
Out of the woodland stream:
Bright, prismed bubbles in her hair,
She rose and smiled upon me there.

But as I gazed at her and gazed,
Dim bubbles grew her eyes;
And frail of dyes her body raised,
And vanished in the skies:
And with the spirit went my dream—
A rainbow bubble of the stream.

LOVE AND THE WIND

ALL were in league to capture Love—
The rock, the stream, the tree;
The very Month was leader of
The whole conspiracy.

It led Love where wild waters met,
And tree hugged close to tree;
And where the dew and sunbeam let
Their lips meet rapturously.

And then it shouted,—"Here he is,
O wild Wind in the tree!
Come, clasp him now, and kiss and kiss!
And call the flowers to see!"

And there, on every side, the wood
Rushed out in flower and tree.—
And that is how, I've understood,
The Springtime came to be.

THE DREAM IN THE WOOD

THE beauty of the day put joy,
Unbounded, in the woodland's breast,
Through which the wind, like some wild boy,
Ran on and took no rest.

The little stream that made its home,
Under the spicewood bough and beech,
Hummed to its heart a song of foam,
Or with the moss held speech.

And he, whose heart was weighed with tears,
And who had come to seek a dream,
For a dim while forgot his fears,
Hearkening the wind and stream.

The wind for him assumed a form,—
A child's, with wildflowers in its hair;
It seemed to take him by the arm
To lead him far from care.

The streamlet raised a hand of spray
By every rock, and waved him on,
Whispering, "Come, take this wildwood way,
And find your dream long gone."

And he, who heard and followed these,
Came on a secret place apart,—
And there, behold! the dream of peace
He found in his own heart.

THE FOREST OF FEAR

THE cut-throat darkness hemmed me 'round:
I waited, helpless in its grasp.
The forest gave no sign or sound:
The wind was dead: no insect's rasp
I heard, nor water's gulp and gasp

Fitting its strength against a stone.
The only sound that there was made
Was my wild heart's that sobbed alone,
Knowing itself to be afraid
Of that vast wood where it had strayed.

I dared not move. There was no star
To indicate where God might be.
Night and his henchmen, without bar,
Had there assumed their empery.—
Nothing but prayer was left to me.

Around me seemed to loom the dead
Of ages past, gaunt in the gloom.
And when I heard a stealthy tread
As of one groping from the tomb,
I braced myself to meet my doom.

And then I heard a breathing low
As of a beast that seeks its prey;
And then the footstep, soft and slow,
Approached again from far away.—
I held my breath lest it betray

Me to some Death—in monstrous guise?—
With fang or talon, or a blade
Grasped in a hand of giant size?—
Or was't a fiend?—And then I prayed,
Who never yet had prayed, for aid.

I closed my eyes. My heart was still.
I did not look.—I knew *it* stood
Glaring upon me all its fill.—
When would it strike?—The ancient wood
Seemed waiting eager for my blood.

I prayed and prayed. The something there
Stood waiting still—a fiend from Hell
Gloating upon my soul's despair?—
This was the end, I knew too well;
It pealed within me like a bell.

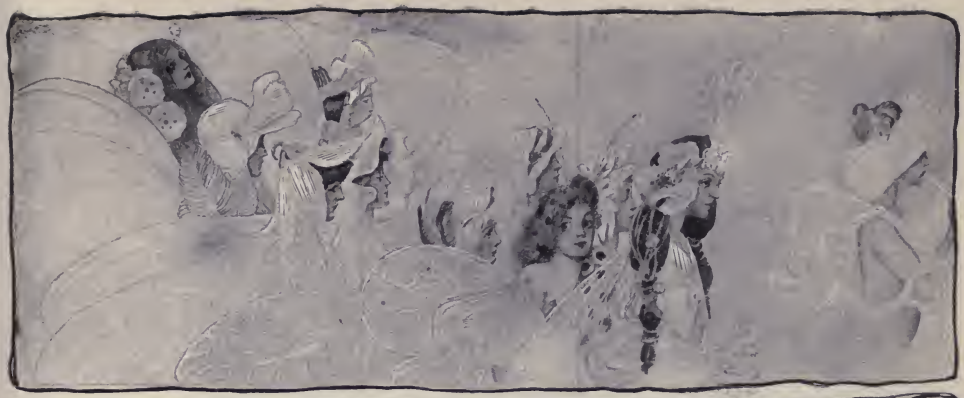
And then I thought, "In spite of all,
It is but death. Earth can not go
Further than death, whate'er befall.—
With open eyes I'll take the blow,
And face to face now meet my foe."

"My foe?"—Perhaps it was a friend.—
What whim put in my heart that thought?—
I had no friends. *This* was the end,
And I would face it: I was caught
In the old gin that sin had wrought.

And then I looked—I looked to see—
How could it be?—serene of eye,
A little Child beneath a tree.
A Child that glimmered starrily;
A Christ-like Child not born to die.

And overhead I saw the night
Had doffed its cowl of black, and stood
Revealed in azure and in white,
While all the staring solitude
Looked on the round moon o'er the wood.

I called the Child. It smiling came;
Undid the bonds of my despair,
And led me forth.—I said, "Your name?"—
It smiled and, gazing, answered, "Prayer."—
And with that word went into air.



THERE ARE FAIRIES

ELFINS of the Autumn night,
Gather! gather! work's to do:
There's the toadstool, plump and white,
To be lifted into view:
And the ghost-flower, like a light,
To be dight,
And washed white with moon and dew;
While the frog,
From the bog,
Watchmans us with "*All is right.*"

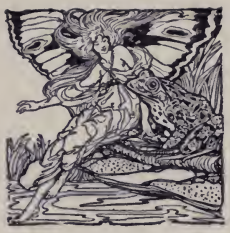
Ouphes, come help the spider spin,
Stretch his webs for mist and moon;
Rim with rounded rain, or, thin,
Curve into a frosty lune:
Lift the mushroom's rosy chin,
Help it win
Through the leaves that lie aboon;
While the cricket
In the thicket
Makes its fairy fiddle din.

"Lift the Mushroom's rosy chin."

Brim the lichen-cups with rain;
Blow to feather the goldenrods;
Help the touchmenots, a-strain
To explode their ripened pods,
Sow their pattering seed again;
Help to stain
Every freckled flower that nods;
While with glee,
In its tree,
Chants the owl its wild refrain.

Drop the acorn in its place;
Split and spill the chestnuts' burrs;
Trail the weeds with pixy lace
Of the moony gossamers;
And with tricksy colors trace
Form and face
Of each leaf the wildwood stirs;
While the fox,
'Mid the rocks,
Barks, or times with ours his pace.

Elfin, ouphe, and gnarly gnome,
Ye who house the humble-bee,
Ride the slow snail to its home,
Wrap the worm up silkenly;
Ye who guard the wild bees' comb,
And the dome
Of the hornets in the tree,
Hear the call—
One and all
Gather! gather, Autumn's come!



SONG AND STORY

THE VIKINGS

A Saga of Yule.

FAR to the South a star,
Bright-shining over all;
And a sound of voices singing,
'Round a Babe in an ox's-stall.

Three Kings a-riding, riding,
With gifts of myrrh and gold,
Far, far from the wild North Ocean,
Of which this tale is told:—

By the sea, in the Hall of Beele,
Were Yule and joy and feast,
Outside was the noise of the ocean
And storm, like a howling beast.

The King sate at the banquet
With his Jarls and Berserks hale,
Quaffing to Thor and Odin
Huge horns of mead and ale.

Unheeded howled the winter
'Round the oak walls of the King,
For a mighty skald with a runic harp
Made the hall re-echoing ring.

Loud laughed the blonde Norse maidens
As they brimmed the barmy cup,
Where the torches flickered the war-blades
And the bucklers hanging up.

But out by the thundering North Sea
Ten shattered dragons lie,
Vessels, like great sea-monsters,
To the billows heaving high.

And pale and hacked with gashes,
'Mid his battered arms lies low
The red-haired Viking, Hareck,
Half-buried in the snow.

And wan, where the waves beat sullen,
Lies his brother, one-eyed Hulf,
Above whose mailéd visage
Snarls the winter-famished wolf.

And where is seen the glimmer
Of arms on dune and shore,
Their warriors, fierce and long-haired,
Lie frozen in their gore.

For Hulf and red-haired Hareck
To Sogn did harrying sail,
But Beele and his Berserkers
Did give them welcome hale.

On the shore of the wild North Ocean,
In the wild mist and the spray,
In the spindrift and the tempest
The battle clanged all day.

On the shore of the wild North Ocean,
When fell the wilder night,
The Vikings, Hulf and Hareck,
As the snow lay cold and white.

Not for long in their shattered armor,
By the billow-booming deep,
Were left the terrible warriors
In their eternal sleep.

For Odin from Valhala
Saw the Vikings fight and fall,
And bade the Valkyrs summon
The heroes to his Hall.

They came. The ghosts of the Vikings
Stood dark-browed on the field,
Moody within the tempest,
Each leaning on his shield.

In his great-horned helm loomed Hareck,
His face like some wild moon
That looks upon the havoc
Of a field with battle strewn.

Like a dark star, dim and misty,
Faint-seen through scud-blown air,
Hulf's face on the Maids of Odin
Shone in its wind-tossed hair.

And with them, lo! another,
Whose face was mild and sad—
Unarmed, no Viking warrior,
A Man in whiteness clad.

Through snow and the foam of the ocean
Glittered the Valkyries,
And the sound of their trumpet voices
Was like to the stormy sea's.

"Behold," they cried, "Valhala
Awaits! And Odin sent!—
The polished skulls are brimmed with mead
And ready the tournament!

"And Thor and Brage and Balder,
And many an Aza fair,
On the pleasant plain of Ida,
Await your coming there!"

And they stretched their glittering gauntlets
To the Vikings standing pale,
And joy lit up their lowering brows
Like moonlight in a gale.

And then the other murmured,—
And His voice was soft and low,—
And a scent as of myrrh and lilies
Swept through the storm and snow:—

"Come to Me, ye who labor,
And ye who are distressed!
All, all whose hearts are burdened,
And I will give you rest.

"I bring a different message
From that just brought of these,
A message of love and forgiveness
From My Father the King of Peace.

"Now ends the reign of Odin,
And My Father's rule begins!
Peace and good-will, good-will and peace,
And forgiveness of all sins!"

And He stretched His arms toward them,
And hushed were the howling gales:
And they saw that His brow was crowned with thorns,
And His hands were pierced with nails.

And there in the Hall of Beele
The sound of Yule died low,
And all was hushed as the Word of Christ
Pealed far through the wind and snow.

TREASURE TROVE

WE were a crew of what you please,
Men with the lust of gold gone mad;
Dutch and Yankee and Portuguese,
With a nigger or two from Trinidad,
The scum of the Caribbees:
Outbound, outbound for a treasure ground,
A pirate isle no man had found,
A long-lost isle in the Southern Seas,
An isle of the Southern Seas.

We sailed our ship by a chart we bore,
The parchment script of a buccaneer,
Whose skeleton, found on a Carib shore,
Had kept its secret for many a year,
Locked in a buckle of belt it wore.
And the dim chart told of buried gold,
A hidden harbor and pirate hold,
On an isle that seamen touched no more,
That sailors knew no more.

We were a crew of Devil-may-care,
Who staked our lives on a bit of a scrawl;
Who diced each other for lot and share
Or ever we hoisted sail at all,
Or the brine blew through our hair.
At last with a hail for calm or gale,
The wind of adventure in our sail,
We piped up anchor and did our dare,
Steered for the Island there.

From Porto Bello to Isle of France,
And thence South East our chart read plain:
We followed the route of old Romance,
The plate-ship route of the Spanish Main,
The old wild route of Chance.
Black Beard sailed it and Jean Lafitte;
And Drake and Morgan, and many a fleet
Of pillage once that led the dance,
Spain's golden-galleon dance.

Moidores, guineas, and pieces-of-eight;
Doubloons round as the gibbous moon;
All the wealth that they sacked as freight
In the good old days of the piccaroon,
We dreamed of soon and late:
And gems of the East, of which the least
Would grace a Khan's or a Caliph's feast,
And chest on chest of Spanish plate,
Great chests of Spanish plate.

The wind blew fair from Panama;
For a month the wind blew fair and free;
We steered our ship by the gold we saw
In the far-off script of a century,
Wherein men knew no law.
We held our course, for better or worse,
Now with a song and now with a curse,
According to the lots we'd draw,
Rum or the lots we'd draw.

We had not reckoned on destiny,
And him all seamen dread, they say,
That captain, old in infamy,
Who holds to Hell till the Judgment Day,
And takes of Earth his fee.—
Oh, black and black is the South Sea track
Of the skeleton Captain, Yellow Jack,
Who sweeps with his boneyard crew the sea,
The hurricane-haunted sea.

. . . . . .

Six weeks we lay in the doldrums; dead;
Six weeks that rotted us with delay,
Till a gale sprang up and drove us ahead,
Out of our course, for a week and a day,
Till we deemed we were Dutchman-led.—
When the gale was done, why, one by one,
The scurvy took us, every son,
And mutiny down in the hold was bred,
Mutiny then was bred.

At last on our bow we sighted shore,
A wild crag circled of cloud and sea;
Our pirate isle, where ceaselessly
The rock-fanged surf kept up its roar
Round a towering bluff and tree,
Where the chart was marked that the gold should be:
Cliffs that the seafowl clamored o'er,
With the dragging seaweed hoar.

A smudge of mist and a gleam that died,
And a muttering down below—
And night was on us at a stride,
And, God! how it came to blow!
And a man went over the side:
Then fore and aft of our crazy craft
Corposants glimmered and Madness laughed,
And a voice from the Island wild replied,
A dæmon voice replied.

Three nights and days of the hurricane's rage.—
What curse now held us off!—
We never would win to an anchorage,
We thought, when, ho! with a scoff
The Island thundered, "Come take your wage!"—
And, lo, that night by the thin moonlight
We found our ship in a bay or bight,
That seemed a part of another age,
A far-off pirate age.

Our ship a-leak and her pumps all jammed
We won to the Harbor of Yellow Jack;
And so it was that *he* took command
And hoisted his skeleton flag of black,
And our decks with dead men crammed.—
But we—we found the treasure ground—
Where some went mad and some were drowned—
For the gold, you see, was damned, was damned,
The gold you see was damned.

SERVICE

I PASSED a cottage 'twixt the town and wood,
And marked its garden, blossoming bright and bold,
And breathing many a scent. Awhile I stood
Near pink and marigold.
It seemed a place of prayer; of love and peace;
Where gray Content with children at his knees,—
Like blessings manifold,
Rested among the trees.

An old man came into the garden-plot;
And 'mid the tansy and the scarlet sage
Found for himself a dim and quiet spot
Wherein to turn a page:
For in his hand he bore a well-thumbed book,
Upon whose pages now and then he'd look;
And then, as if with age,
His hoary head he shook.

I said to him: "You have a lovely place.
How rich your garden blooms! How sweet its shade!
How good to sit here in the eve and face
Those hills of woods while fade
The sunset's splendors—like a bannered host
Before the glory of the Holy Ghost,—
While Dusk, in light arrayed,
Takes up his starry post."

The old man smiled, and turned around to stare
Not at me but above my head, as if
He saw a form, a flying phantom there,
A flaming hippogriff:
Then said: "You find here what I keep in mind—
Thoughts—thoughts of beauty with which God is kind
To an old man grown stiff
And half-way deaf and blind.

"This garden, now, in every herb and flower,
Expresses what the Bible says in part
Unto my soul: To serve God every hour,
In thought, or through some art,
With loveliness: as men did long ago,
Work at some beauty that shall gleam and glow
With worship of the heart,
Whose dream shall burn below.

"For men may serve God in their humblest works:
In gardens, say, like mine; wherein the Word
Walks with me, and in every rosebush lurks
God's blessing like a bird."
And so he ceased. And, like the Seraphim,
The sunset clouds spread golden over him;
And in the trees I heard,
The wind, like some far hymn.

AT THE FALL OF DEW

ONE bright star in the firmament,
One wild rose in the dew,
And a girl, like the sparkling two,
Following the cows that went
Through roses wet with dew,
Roses, two by two.

Shy she was as the twilight skies
When they hesitate with stars,
As she stood to wait at the pasture bars,
Gazing with far-off eyes
At the slowly coming stars
Over the pasture bars.

She hummed a tune while the cattle passed,
And the bells in the dusk clanged clear;
Then a whistle caught her ear,
And she knew 'twas love at last,
While the bells in the dusk clanged clear,
And his whistle caught her ear.

The smell of the hay came warm and sweet
From the field there where he stood,
The field by the old beech wood,
Where a bird sang, "Sweet! oh, sweet!"
In the tree there, where he stood
By the old beech wood.

Then a voice at the farmyard gate
Called to her down the road,
Where the fireflies' lights were sowed;
But she answered the one await
By the tree at the end of the road
Where the fireflies' lights were sowed.

Right young was he and brown and strong
As a farmer's lad should be;
And she?—with her soul of witchery
And a heart, like a bird's, of song,
All a country girl should be,
With a soul of witchery.

Oh! I can see them yet
In the dusk of the long-ago—
Two lovers walking slow;
And my eyes with tears are wet
For the love of the long-ago,
Love of the long-ago.

Unmasked

WAS it a dream,
Or a whim of the night?
Or *did* they gleam
Upon my sight
An instant there in the wan moonlight?—

I saw them all, I think,
Under the bowers,
The faery folk, in a moonbeam wink,
Disguised as flowers.

First came the Bleeding-Hearts, that hang like bells
Or delicate shells;
Who, gowned in white and red,
Hooped skirts and furbelows,
A long procession led
Of Faery Ladies and their beaux,
Such as the Violet and Early Rose,
Into the ball-room of the flower-bed,
Where they began a Pixy minuet.—
Then suddenly, from whence nobody knows,
The Johnny-Jump-Ups glimmered in that set,
Tipping about on tiny flower-toes,
All dressed in twinkling velvet, black and blue,
Faint-jeweled with the dew:
Stout sons of Faërie, Yeomen of the Night,
Glittering, each one, a rapier-ray of light:—

Then, bowing two by two,—
While all the Bleeding-Hearts stood by and fanned,
They, silken hand in hand,
Began a faery saraband,
That wound and interwound, and went and came
again.—
And then,
In ruffed and ribboned lines,
The gold-and-ruby gleaming Columbines,
Fair Maids-of-Honor to the Faery Queen,—
Who still remained unseen,—
Trailed twinkling into view.

And then a trumpet blew
A beetle-blast—and there!

Adown a glowworm-lanthorned avenue,
Tall two by two,
With sapphire-helméd hair,
Proud Knights and minions of the moon,
The Larkspurs, to a cricket tune,
Marched with a haughty air.
And golden-cuirassed, blowing a wild fanfare
Of fragrant notes
From honey-crystaled throats,
Snapdragons, Trumpeters of the Faery King,
With pomp and glittering
Of many an elfin prince and peer,
Drew near.

And when I felt secure,
And sure
The King and Queen of Faërie would appear,
My dear,
A cockerel crew, a thwarting cockerel crew,
And, presto! whew!
The whole scene went in air,
Leaving it there,—
The garden,—glimmering with the moon and dew,
Looking demure
With all its flowers. But I knew,
Nay, I was *sure*,
It was not quite as innocent as it seemed.
It could not fool me with its looks demure.
I *knew* I had not dreamed.

THE HEART'S OWN DAY

THIS is the heart's own day:
With dreaming eyes
Life seems to look away
Beyond the skies
Into some long-gone May.

A May that can not die;
Across whose hills
Youth's heart goes singing by,
'Mid daffodils,
With Love the young and shy.

Love of the slender form
And elvish face;
Who with uplifted arm
Points to one place—
A place of oldtime charm.

Where once the lilies grew
For Love to twine,
With violets, white and blue,
And columbine,
Of gold and crimson hue.

Gone is the long-ago;
Gone like the wind;
And Love we used to know
Sits dumb and blind,
With locks of winter snow.

And by him Memory
  Sits sketching back
Into the used-to-be,
  In white and black,
One flower on his knee.

One rose, whose crimson gleams
  Like Youth's glad heart,
And fills the day with dreams,
  And is a part
Of the old love it seems.

That touches with the tints
  Of Faeryland
This day; and makes a prince—
  Of Samarcand,—
  Of him, whose hand
Hers held in dreams long since.

THE RIBBON

THOSE were the days of doubt. How clear
It all comes back!—This ribbon, see?
Brings that far past so very near
I lose my own identity,
And seem two beings: one that's here,
And one back in that century
Of cowardice and fear,
Wherein I met with love and her,
When I was but a wanderer.

Those were the days of doubt, I said:
I doubted all things; even God.
Within my heart there was no dread
Of Hell or Heaven. Never a rod
Was there to smite; no mercy led:
And man's reward was death: a clod
He was, alive or dead.
Those were the days of doubt; and so
I scoffed at all things, high and low.

And then I met *her*. Fair and frail,
A girl whose soul was as a flame
That burns within the Holy Grael;
And through her eyes shone clear the same
Fanatic fire, pure and pale,—
That once put Sisera to shame
In the dark eyes of Jael,
When, leading him into her tent,
She used the nail as argument.

There was no argument of grace
  She did not use; no dogma, wrought
Of sophistry, she did not place
  Before me, leading up my thought
To Heaven from the fearful maze
  Of Hell, wherein God's angels fought
With fiends, on darkling ways.
I listened—but in her young look
Was more for me than in God's Book.

She seemed a priestess. Heaven to be
  Was in her face.—A ribbon bound
Her hair like a phylactery.—
  This is the band.—I took it; wound
And laid it on my heart.—Ah me!
  No other argument I found
As good as that. Convincingly
It held me sane and sound.
And I have kept it here alway
Since first she gave it me that day.

"Where is she now"?—I do not know.
  She is the wife of one whose hand,
Stretched forth to aid me long-ago,
  Took from me more than all this land
In her own self,—and gave me woe
  To take her place.—As here I stand
I stood and took the blow,
While in my heart I looked and saw
The love that filled my soul with awe.

And did she love me? Am I sure?—
Ah, while I heard angelic hosts
Of Heaven singing love, there were
Black wings about me: all the ghosts
Of all my doubts. I heard them stir,
And so drew back from those bright coasts
Of happiness with her.
Despite the love within my heart
Doubt entered, and began its part.

Make no mistake. I loved her; ay!
And she loved me as women love
The thing they save.—I spoke my lie,
That by my lie I so might prove
Her love, and with the proof defy
The doubt, whose shadow hung above,
Watching with jealous eye.
So I denied love.—Played a part—
And, playing it, broke my own heart.

The better part of me then died;
I killed *her* love, not *mine*.—You see
I keep this ribbon here, she tied
My heart to hers with.—Silkenly
It says, "She is another's bride.
Through me now keep in memory
Your doubt was justified.
She did not love you. She could change."—
I keep the ribbon.—Is it strange?

THE PLOUGHBOY

A LILAC mist makes warm the hills,
And silvery through it threads a stream:
The redbird's cadence throbs and thrills,
The jaybirds scream.
The bluets' stars begin to gleam,
And 'mid them, whispering with the rills,
The morning-hours dream.

The ploughboy Spring drives out his plough,
A robin's whistle on his lips;
And as he goes with lifted brow,
And snaps and whips
His lash of wind, a sunbeam tips,
The wildflowers laugh, and on the bough
The blossom skips.

The scent of winter-mellowed loam
And greenwood buds is blown from him,
As blithe he takes his young way home,
Large, strong of limb,
Along the hilltop's sunset brim,
Whistling; the first star, white as foam,
In his hat's blue rim.

THE DITTANY

THE scent of dittany was hot.
Its smell intensified the heat:
Into his brain it seemed to beat
With memories of a day forgot,
When she walked with him through the wheat,
And noon was heavy with the heat.

Again her eyes gazed into his
With all their maiden tenderness;
Again the fragrance of her dress
Swooned on his senses; and, with bliss,
Again he felt her heart's caress
Full of a timid tenderness.

What of that spray she plucked and gave?
The spray of this wild dittany,
Whose scent brought back to memory
A something lost, beyond the grave.—
He knew now what it meant, ah me!
That spray of withered dittany.

How many things he had forgot!—
Far, lovely things Life flings away!—
And where was *she* now?—Who could say?—
The dittany, whose scent was hot,
Spoke to his heart; and, old and gray,
Through the lone land he went his way.

"THE OLD REMAIN"

THE old remain, the young are gone.
The farm dreams lonely on the hill:
From early eve to early dawn
A cry goes with the whippoorwill—
"The old remain, the young are gone."

Where run the roads they wander on?
The young, whose hearts romped shouting here:
Whose feet thrilled rapture through this lawn,
Where sadness walks now all the year.—
The old remain, the young are gone.

To what far glory are they drawn?
And do they weary of the quest?
And serve they now a king or pawn
There in the cities of unrest?—
The old remain, the young are gone.

They found the life here gray and wan,
Too kind, too poor, too full of peace:
The great mad world of brain and brawn
Called to their young hearts without cease.—
The old remain, the young are gone.

They left us to our Avalon,
The ancient fields, the house and trees,
Where we at sunset and at dawn
May sit with dreams and memories.—
The old remain, the young are gone.

Dear Heart, draw near and lean upon
  My heart, and gaze no more through tears:
We have our love; our work well done,
  To help us face the wistful years.—
The old remain, the young are gone.

THE OLD HOME

THEY'VE torn the old house down, that stood,
Like some kind mother, in this place,
Hugged by its orchard and its wood,
Two sturdy children, strong of race.

This formal place makes no appeal.
I miss the oldtime happiness
And peace, which often here did heal
The cares of life, the heart's distress.

The shrubs,—which snowed their blossoms on
The walks, wide-stretching from the doors
Like friendly arms,—are dead and gone,
And over all a grand house soars.

Within its front no welcome lies,
But pride's aloofness; wealth, that stares
From windows, cold as haughty eyes,
The arrogance of new-made heirs.

Its very flowers breathe of cast;
And even the Springtide seems estranged,
In that stiff garden, caught, held fast,
All her wild beauty clipped and changed.

'T is not the Spring, that once I knew,
Who made a glory of her face,
And robed in shimmering light and dew
Moved to wild music in this place.

How fair she walked here with her Hours,
Pouring forth colors and perfumes,
And with her bosom heaped with flowers
Climbed by the rose-vines to its rooms.

Or round the old porch, 'mid the trees,
Fluttered a flute of bluebird-song;
Or murmuring with a myriad bees
Drowsed in the garden all day long.

How Summer, with her apron full
Of manna, shook the red peach down;
Or, stretched among the shadows cool,
Wove for her hair a daisy crown.

Or with her crickets, night and day,
Gossiped of many a faery thing,
Her sweet breath warm with scents of hay
And honey, purple-blossoming.

How Autumn, trailing tattered gold
And scarlet, in the orchard mused,
And of the old trees taking hold
Upon the sward their ripeness bruised.

Or, past its sunset window-panes,
  Like thoughts that drift before old eyes,
Whirled red leaves and the ragged rains,
  And crows, black-blown, about the skies.

How Winter, huddled in her hood
  Of snow and sleet, crouched by its flues;
Or, rushing from the stormy wood,
  Rapped at its doors with windy news.

Or in the firelight, through the pane,
  Watched Comfort crown with cheer the hearth,
Or Love lead in his Yuletide train
  Of hospitality and mirth. . . .

It lived. The house was part of us.
  It was not merely wood and stone,
But had a soul, a heart, that thus
  Grappled and made us all its own.

The lives that with its life were knit,
  In some strange way, beyond the sense,
Had gradually given to it
  A look of old experience.

A look, which I shall not forget,
  No matter where my ways may roam.—
I close my eyes: I see it yet—
  The old house that was once my home.

A SUMMER DAY

WHITE clouds, like thistledown at fault,
That drift through heaven's azure vault.
The sun beams down; the weedy ground
Vibrates with many an insect sound.
Blackberry-lilies in the noon
Lean to the creek with eyes a-swoon,
Where, in a shallow, silver gleams
Of minnows and a heron dreams—
An old road, clouding pale the heat
Behind a slow hoof's muffled beat:
And there, hill-gazing at the skies,
A pond, within whose languor lies
A twinkle,—like an eye that smiles
In thought; that with a dream beguiles
The day: a dream of clouds that drift,
And arms the willow trees uplift,
Protectingly, as if to hide
The wildbird on its nest that cried.

Now mists that mass the sunset-dyes
Build an Arabia in the skies,
Through which the sun in pomp retires,
Torched to his room with saffron fires;
And 'thwart his palace door is laid
A crescent sign, a moony blade,
Then glittering in a cloud is sheathed;
And, dripping crimson, fire-wreathed,
A magic scimetar of flame
Is slowly drawn before the same.

The door of Day is closed; its bar
Put up, one bright and golden star;
While, crowding all the corridors
Of Dusk, the shadows, blackamoors
Of darkness, glide; and zephyrs sweep
Mist-gowns of musk through halls of Sleep—
Dim odalisques of Night, who wait
Upon their lord who lies in state.

THE OLD GARDEN

SPURGE and sea-pink, hyssop blue,
Dragonhead of purple hue;
Catnip, frosted green and gray,
With blue butterflies a-sway,
These may point you out the way.

These and Summer's acolytes,
Crickets, singing days and nights,
Tell you the old road again;
And adown the tangled lane
Lead you to her window-pane.

Goldenrod and goldenglow
Crowd the gate in which you go;
To your arm they cling and catch,
Kiss the hand that lifts the latch,
Guide you to her garden-patch.

O'er the fence the hollyhock
Leans to greet you; and the stock
Looks as if it thought, "I knew
You were coming. Gave the cue
To the place to welcome you."

And the crumpled marigold
And the dahlia, big and bold,
With Sweet Williams, white and red,
Nod at you a drowsy head
From the sleepy flowerbed.

Where all day the brown bees croon,
Honey-drunk; and stars and moon
All night long lean down to hear,
In the silence far and near,
Whippoorwills a-calling clear.

While adown the dewy dark
Flits a flame, a firefly spark,
Leading to a place of myrrh,
Where, in lace and lavender,
Waits the Loveliness of her.

THE YELLOW PUCCOON

(A Wildflower.)

WHO could describe you, child of mystery
And silence, born among these solitudes?
Within whose look there is a secrecy,—
Old as these wandering woods,—
And knowledge, cousin to the morning-star,
Beyond the things that mar,
And earth itself that on the soul intrudes.

How many eons—what antiquity
Went to your making? When the world was young
You yet were old. What mighty company
Of cosmic forces swung
About you!—On what wonders have you gazed
Since first your head was raised
To greet the Power that here your seed-spore flung!

The butterfly that woos you, and the bee
That quits the mandrakes' cups to whisper you,
Are in your confidence and sympathy,
As sunlight is and dew,
And the soft music of this woodland stream,
Telling the trees its dream,
That lean attentive its dim face unto.

With bluet, larkspur, and anemone
  Your gold conspires to arrest the eye,
Making it prisoner unto Fantasy
  And Vision,—none 'll deny!—
That lead the mind (as children lead the blind
Homeward by ways that wind)
  To certainties of love that round it lie.

The tanager, in scarlet livery,
  Out-flaunts you not in bravery,—amber-bright
As is the little moon of Faërie,
  That glows with golden light
From out a firmament of green, as you—
From out the moss and dew—
  Glimmer your starry disc upon my sight.

If I might know you, have you, as the bee
  And butterfly, in some more intimate sense—
Or, like the brook there talking to the tree,
  Win to your confidence—
Then might I grasp it, solve it, in some wise,
This riddle in disguise
  Named Life, through you and your experience.

THE OLD CREEK

THE frogs still cry, "Knee-deep! knee-deep!"
Among its starlit pools,
When dark the woodland lies asleep,
And dusk its water cools:
The fireflies round its bank of ferns
Hang will-o'-wisps for lamps,
Where in a place no eye discerns
Enchantment's host encamps.

The bats above it go and come
In reeling rigadoons,
While Elfland beats a beetle-drum,
Or cricket-fiddle tunes;
And in and out, and all about,
The pixy people dance
To katydid song and green-frog gong
That hold the woods in trance.

The moon looks, listening, through its trees
As if to hear its calls,
Or with long arms of light to seize
Its twinkling waterfalls
With Witchcraft who, a foam-white hand,
Its glimmering banks between,
Beckons from sand to riffled sand,
To something far, unseen.

A ghost, that leans beside it still;
The phantom of a boy,
Who followed once its wildwood will
With barefoot troops of joy:
The soul of him who yearns afar
To see, in dusk and dew,
If still it dances with the star
That once his boyhood knew.

"While Elfland beats a beetle-drum,
Or Cricket-fiddle tunes."

THE CLOSE OF SUMMER

THE wild-plum tree, whose leaves grow thin,
Has strewn the way with half its fruit:
The grasshopper's and cricket's din
Grows hushed and mute;
The veery seems a far-off flute
Where Summer listens, hand on chin,
And taps an idle foot.

A silvery haze veils half the hills,
That crown themselves with clouds like cream;
The crow its clamor almost stills,
The hawk its scream;
The aster stars begin to gleam;
And 'mid them, by the sleepy rills,
The Summer dreams her dream.

The butterfly upon its weed
Droops as if weary of its wings;
The bee, 'mid blooms that turn to seed,
Half-hearted clings,
Sick of the only song it sings,
While Summer tunes a drowsy reed
And dreams of far-off things.

Passion, of which unrest is part,
That filled with ardor all her hours,

Burns low within her quiet heart
  As now in ours:
  The time fulfilled of fruits and flowers,
From out Life's dying fires now start
  Love's less uneasy powers.

All is at peace; the perfect days
  Move onward to a perfect close;
A little while the Year delays,
  And takes repose,
  Ere to her end she sighing goes,
And, clothed in tattered golds and grays,
  Weeps all her shadowy woes. . . .

So is it with the heart awhile,
  The heart and soul that dreams engage,
While on fruition Toil doth smile
  And take his wage
  Of Love, who cons Life's middle page;
Regardless of the distant stile
  Where Death awaits and Age.

THE HUNTER'S MOON

DARKLY October, where the wild fowl fly,
Utters a harsh and melancholy cry;
And slowly closing, far, a sunset door,
Day wildly glares upon the world once more,
Where Twilight, with one star to lamp her by,
Walks with the Wind that haunts the hills and shore.

The Spirit of Autumn, with averted gaze,
Comes slowly down the ragged garden ways;
And where she walks she lays a finger cold
On rose and aster, lily and marigold,
And at her touch they turn, in mute amaze,
And bow their heads, assenting to the cold.

And all around rise phantoms of the flowers,
Scents, ghost-like, gliding from the dripping bowers;
And evermore vague, spectral voices ring
Of Something gone, or Something perishing:
Joy's requiem; hope's tolling of the Hours;
Love's dirge of dreams for Beauty sorrowing.

And now the moon above the garden side
Lifts a pale face and looks down misty-eyed,
As if she saw the ghost of yesteryear
That once with Happiness went wandering here
And the young Loveliness of days that died
Sitting with Memory 'mid the sad and sere.

THE GRASSHOPPER

THE grasshopper, that sang its sleepy song
All summer long,
The orchard lands and harvest fields among,
Taking no heed of aught save its own joy,
Without alloy,
Cheering the ear with its "Ahoy! ahoy!"—
A merry note of summer's self a part,—
Like my old heart,
Is silent now and cold; its singing done.
The grasshopper's a-cold and summer's gone,
And I'm alone.

THE COWARD

HE found the road so long and lone
That he was fain to turn again.
The bird's faint note, the bee's low drone
Seemed to his heart to monotone
The unavailing and the vain,
And dirge the dreams that life had slain.

And for a while he sat him there
Beside the way, and bared his head:
He felt the hot sun on his hair;
And weed-warm odors everywhere
Waked memories, forgot or dead,
Of days when love this way had led

To that old house beside the road
With white board-fence and picket gate,
And garden plot that gleamed and glowed
With color, and that overflowed
With fragrance; where, both soon and late,
She 'mid the flowers used to wait.

Was it the same? or had it changed,
As he and she, with months and years?
How long now had they been estranged?
How far away their lives had ranged,
Since that last meeting, filled with tears,
And boyish hopes and maiden fears!

He closed his eyes, and seemed to see
That parting now: The moon above
The old house and its locust tree;
The moths that glimmered drowsily
From flower to flower, the scent whereof
Seemed portion of that oldtime love.

Her face was lifted, pale and wet;
Her body tense as if with pain:
He stooped,—yes, he could see it yet—
A moment and their young lips met,
And then . . . There in the lonely lane
He seemed to live it o'er again.

Why had he gone?—'Twas for her sake.—
But what had come of all his toil?
The City, like some monster snake,
Had dragged him down—down, half awake,
Crushing him in its grimy coil,
Whence none escapes without a soil.

He was not clean yet. She would read
Failure, vice-written, in his face.
But, haply, now she had no need
Of him, whose life, like some wild weed
Full grown, with evil would replace
The love in her heart's garden-space.

He could not bear to look and see
The question in those virgin eyes.
What answer for that look had he?

He thought it out. It could not be.
He could not live a life of lies.—
Better to break all oldtime ties.

And then he rose. The house was near—
There where the road turned from the wood.—
Whose voice was that he seemed to hear?—
Then heart and soul were seized with fear,
And, turning, as if death-pursued,
He fled into the solitude.

SHADOWS ON THE SHORE

THE doubtful dawn came dim and wan,
And dimmer grew the day:
The kildee whistled among the weeds,
The blue crane clanged in the river reeds,
And a mist fell wild and gray.

At dawn she stood, her heavy hood
Flung back, in the ferry boat,
To watch the rebel raiders ride,
Her rebel-love, with his men beside,
His kiss on her mouth and throat.

Like some dark spell the tempest fell,
Like some wild curse night came:
For hours she heard the warring dead,
Whose batteries opened overhead
With thunder and with flame.

And now again, in wind and rain,
She toiled at the creaking oar:—
Oh what had she heard in the night and storm?
Whose voice was that? and whose the form
That galloped to the shore?

Across the stream, in the tempest's gleam,
Who sent that wild halloo?
In the lightning's glare, who was it there,
The wind and the rain in his tossing hair,
And his gray cloak torn in two?

Through rain and blast pull fast, pull fast!
  Oar down the rushing tide!—
Look where he rides in the lightning's glow!—
And hearken now to his far hallo!—
But only his horse, with head hung low,
A blur of blood on the saddlebow,
  Comes whinnying to her side.

WASTELAND

BRIAR and fennel and chinquapin,
And rue and ragweed everywhere;
The field seemed sick as a soul with sin,
Or dead of an old despair,
Born of an ancient care.

The cricket's cry and the locust's whirr,
And the note of a bird's distress,
With the rasping sound of a grasshoppér,
Clung to the loneliness
Like burrs to a ragged dress.

So sad the field, so waste the ground,
So curst with an old despair,
A woodchuck's burrow, a blind mole's mound,
And a chipmunk's stony lair,
Seemed more than it could bear.

So solemn too, so more than sad,
So droning-lone with bees—
I wondered what more could Nature add
To the sum of its miseries—
And then I saw the trees.

Skeletons gaunt, that gnarled the place,
Twisted and torn they rose,
The tortured bones of a perished race
Of monsters no mortal knows.
They startled the mind's repose.

And a man stood there, as still as moss,
A lichen form that stared;
And an old blind hound, that seemed at loss,
Forever around him fared
With a snarling fang half-bared.

I looked at the man. I saw him plain.
Like a dead weed, gray and wan,
Or a breath of dust.—I looked again—
And man and dog were gone—
Like wisps o' the graying dawn. . . .

Were they a part of the grim death there?—
Ragweed, fennel, and rue?—
Or forms of the mind, an old despair,
That there into semblance grew
Out of the grief I knew?

THE OLD HOUSE IN THE WOOD

WEEDS and dead leaves, and leaves the Autumn stains
With hues of rust and rose whence moisture weeps;
Gnarl'd thorns, from which the knotted haw-fruit rains
On paths the gray moss heaps.

One golden flower, like a dreamy thought
In the sad mind of Age, makes bright the wood;
And near it, like a fancy Childhood-fraught,
The toadstool's jaunty hood.

Webs, in whose snares the nimble spiders crouch,
Waiting the prey that comes, moon-winged, with night:
Slugs and the snail which trails the mushroom's pouch,
That marks the wood with white.

An old gaunt house, round which the trees decay,
Its porches fallen and its windows gone,
Starts out at you as if to bar the way,
Or bid you hurry on.

A picket fence, grim as a skeleton arm,
Is flung around a weed-wild garden place;
The gate, o'er which the rose once hung its charm,
Gapes in an empty space.

Here nothing that was beauty's now remains:
Old death and sorrow have made all their own,
And life and love, who wrought here, for their pains
Have nothingness alone.

I stand before the shattered fence and gaze:—
All, all is silent now where once was noise
Of household duties, gossip of kind days,
And little children's joys.

Then suddenly I see a shadow slip
From out the house: A ghost of bygone years;
One finger lifted to its pallid lip,
It passes me with tears.

It passes me 'mid whirling leaves and rain.—
Between the trees I see it gleam and glide.
I know it for the dream which once in vain
My heart had made its guide.

Was it for this that I had come the blind
Old ways of life back to Love's house again?
The house of Memory, there again to find
The dream that proved in vain?

A will-o'-wisp; a faery fire; a spark,
That led me where I knew not; and at last
Would leave me, lost within the woodland dark,
'Mid shadows of the past.

Again I followed; and again it failed.
And night came on. And then once more it seemed
That all was lost; that nothing more availed—
When, lo!—a window gleamed,

And I was home. . . . Thank God for love! and light,
Set in the window of the days that were!
And for the dream, though vain, that through the night
Leads back to home and her!

ONE WHO DIED YOUNG

WITH her 't is well now. She died young,
With all her hope and faith unmarred,
Nor lived to see the pearls, Love strung,
Without regard,
Cast, lost among
The disillusions that make life so hard.

Time on her body now can lay
No soiling hand and spoil what's fair:
He shall not turn the gold hair gray,
Nor bring crabbed Care,
Day after day,
To line the white brow with the heart's despair.

Far better thus. Yea, even so,
To die before faith turns to dust,
Before the heart has learned to know,
As learn it must,
Of love the woe,
And of all human life the deep disgust.

FAILURE

NO ray, no will-o'-wisp, no firefly gleam;
Nothing but night around:
The only sound the sobbing of a stream
Within the hush profound.

Then suddenly the chanting of a bird,
Plaintive, appealing, far—
And in my heart the murmur of a word,
And high in heaven a star.

A star, that shone out suddenly and seemed
A herald of the light,—
The dawn, that cried within me, "Lo! you dreamed
That 'twould be always night!

"If night be here, dawn is not far away,
However dark the sky.
And in the heart whatever doubts betray,
Faith still stands smiling by.

"Put trust in God, and hold to your one aim.
And though it is to be
Failure at last, then let it seem the same
As victory."

THE NEW GOD

I LOOK about me, and behold
How all is changed: The sound and sane,
The kind, the true, the hale and old,
That once made strong the features plain
Of life, are cast in other mold,
That bears the stamp of greed and gold—
A god unclean, who drags a chain
Of jewelled lust, which men call Gain,
Binding their hearts to all that's vain,
That God at last for punishment
Shall curse with woe and discontent.

DIES ILLA

HOW shall it be with them that day
When God demands of Earth His pay?
With them who make a god of clay
And gold and put all truth away.

Shall not they see the lightning-ray
Of wrath? and hear the trumpet-bray
Of black destruction? while dismay
O'erwhelms them and God's hosts delay?

Shall not they, clothed in rich array,
Pray God for mercy? and, a-sway,
Heap on their hearts the ashes gray
Of old repentance?—Nay! oh, nay!

They shall not know till He shall lay
An earthquake hand upon their way;
And Doomsday, clad in Death's decay,
Sweep down, and they've no time to pray.

EPILOGUE

THERE is a world Life dreams of, long since lost:
Invisible save only to the heart:
That spreads its cloudy islands, without chart,
Above the Earth, 'mid oceans none has crossed:
Far Faerylands, that have become a part
Of mortal longings; that, through difficult art,
Man strives to realize to the uttermost.

Could we attain that Land of Faërie
Here in the flesh, what starry certitudes
Of loveliness were ours! what mastery
Of beauty and the dream that still eludes!
What clearer vision!—Ours were then the key
To Mystery, that Nature jealously
Locks in her heart of hearts among the woods.

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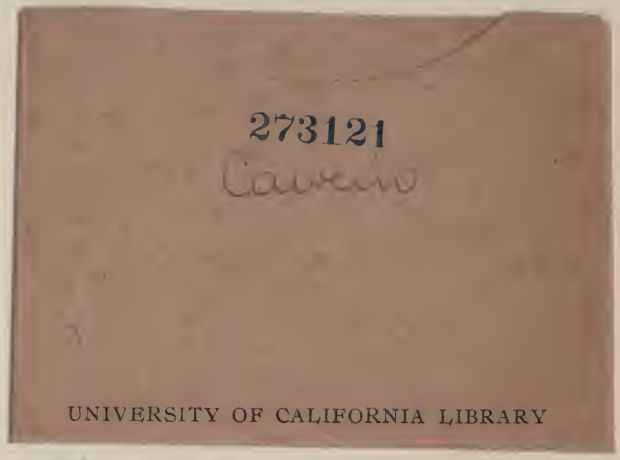

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